

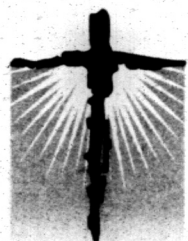
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JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

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MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

Miss. Baptists honored for relief efforts

By Lee Weeks, staff writer
N. American Mission Board

A pair of longtime Mississippi Baptist disaster relief workers were honored by more than 300 leaders from 33 state Baptist conventions who attended the 2005 Disaster Relief Roundtable on April 26-28 at First Church, Hendersonville, Tennessee.

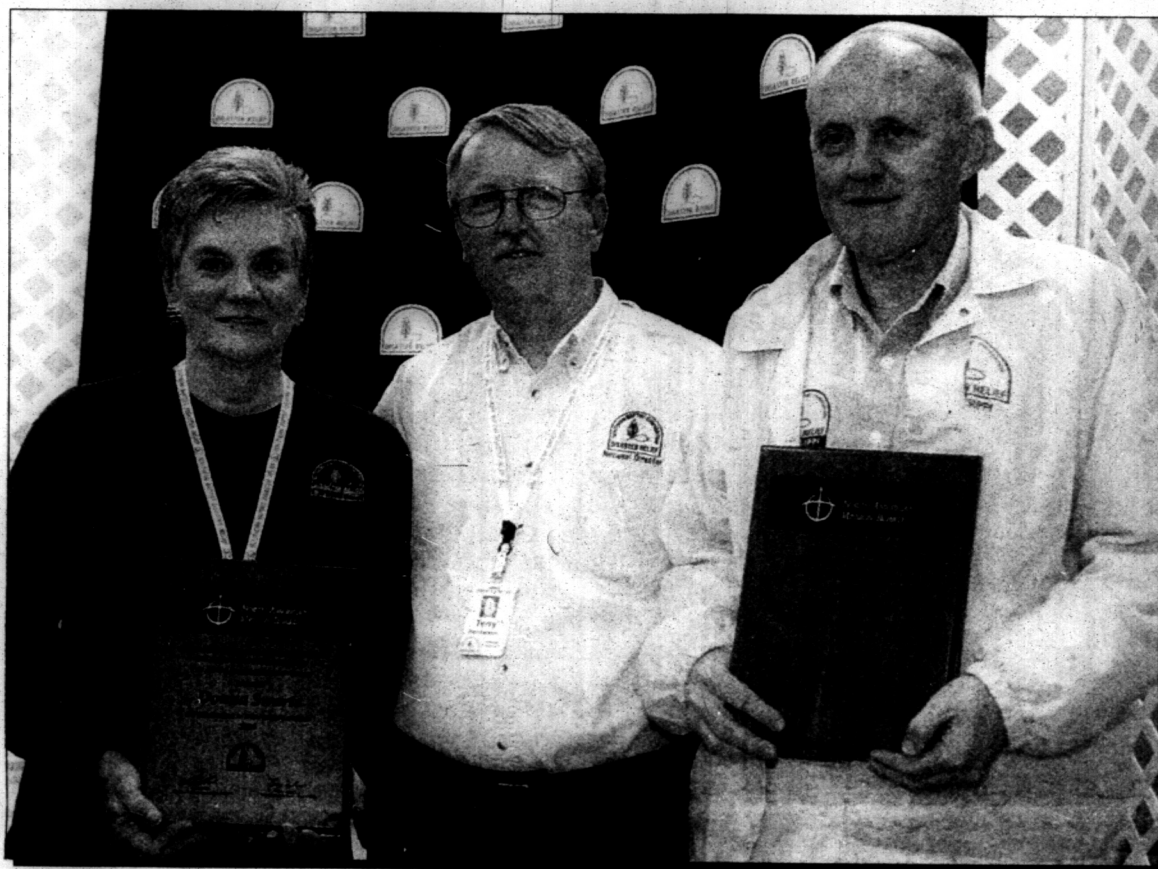
Jim Didlake, director of men's ministries for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board and disaster relief coordinator since 1982, was presented the 2005 National Disaster Relief Roundtable Robert E. Dixon Award. The award, the most prestigious of its kind, is named in honor of a Southern Baptist Texan who pioneered the Southern Baptist disaster relief ministry.

Mickey Caison, adult volunteer mobilization manager with the North American Mission Board (NAMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention, praised Didlake's leadership during last fall's hurricane season. Didlake is a member of First Church, Brandon.

"It has been said, Jim serves as the 'Jimmy Cricket' of disaster relief — our conscience — reminding us that ministry belongs to God and not us. He calls us to better ourselves because we represent Christ. He understands that every number represents a person. He has never gotten away from that. If you want to know what a Christ-like leader in disaster relief looks like, look at Jim Didlake."

Donna Swarts, a member of Goodwater Church, Magee, was selected to receive one of two 2005 National Disaster Relief Roundtable Outstanding Achievement Awards.

Swarts, incoming president of the Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union, has worked with the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force for many years and is one of the only women ever to serve as a "White Cap," or overall director of a specific disaster relief response, in the Southern Baptist Convention.



LEADERS RECOGNIZED — Donna Swarts (left) a member of Goodwater Church, Magee, and Jim Didlake (right), director of men's ministry for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, accept national awards from the National Disaster Relief Roundtable for their outstanding work over many years with the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force. Presenting the awards was Terry Henderson, national Southern Baptist Disaster Relief director. Swarts is also incoming president of the Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union. (BR photo courtesy of North American Mission Board)

She is also credited with helping create the national childcare manual for disaster relief ministry.

"I have been most impressed by the way she ministers through her work to both the volunteers as well as those who are affected by disasters," Caison said. "Whether she is holding a child or witnessing to a lost person, she lives out her faith in her daily walk."

She has been an inspiration to all of us who work with her."

The other Outstanding Achievement Award went to Jack Noble, who serves as disaster relief director for the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia.

Under Noble's leadership, the convention's disaster relief ministry has grown from its inception in 2002 to include more than 500 trained volunteers.

The ministry also includes a shower unit, mobile feeding unit, command unit, and nine chainsaw

units. Noble is a member of North Main Church, Danville, Va.

Disaster relief ministry leaders from Alabama, Georgia, Michigan, Virginia, and West Virginia were presented the 2005 National Disaster Relief Roundtable Distinguished Service Awards.

About 31,000 trained volunteers currently are part of the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief network nationwide. Disaster relief units generally are owned and operated by state conventions, local associations, and churches, and are coordinated nationally by NAMB.

In 2004, more than 15,000 trained Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers gave their time, talents, and energies in response to 193 natural disasters which included hurricanes, an earthquake, floods, tornadoes, and ice storms.

Southern Baptists prepared more than 3.5 million meals, repaired more than 2,600 buildings, and completed nearly 11,000 cleanup and recovery projects — all record responses.

For more information on the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force, contact Carol Wright at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3334 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 334. E-mail: cwright@mbcb.org. Web site: www.mbcb.org.

William H. Perkins Jr. contributed to this article.

Nominees sought for 2006 MBC posts

Members of the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) Committee on Nominations will soon begin meeting and reviewing the trustee/board member positions on MBC boards and commissions for 2006. According to Lamar McDonald, committee chairman and member of Poplar Springs Drive Church, Meridian, there are a limited number of vacancies to be filled on the following boards and commissions:

- Board of Ministerial Education
- Christian Action Commission
- Education Commission

- Historical Commission
- Baptist Children's Village
- Mississippi Baptist Foundation
- Baptist Health Systems, Inc. (Jackson)
- Baptist Memorial Health Care System, Inc. (Memphis)
- Blue Mountain College
- Mississippi College
- William Carey College
- Miss. Baptist Convention Bd.

The Committee on nominations will work in conjunction with the heads of the institutions and agencies in bringing a list of nominees to be approved by the messengers at the 170th annual meeting of

the Mississippi Baptist Convention on Nov. 1-2 at First Church, Jackson.

Nomination forms can be obtained by contacting Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, Executive Administration, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3201 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 201. E-mail: bbbox@mbcb.org. The form is also available at the convention board web site, www.mbcb.org.

Completed forms should be mailed to the Committee on Nominations, Executive Administration, at the above address to be received by June 1.



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Remembering the war dead

On Monday we will observe Memorial Day 2005, a nationwide tribute to America's war dead that had its beginnings in Mississippi when the people of Columbus paused to remember and decorate local military graves in the years after the end of the Civil War.

To paraphrase Thomas Jefferson, the Tree of Liberty has since been watered with the blood of many more brave men and women who have given their lives in defense of this country in some of the most horrific conflagrations in human history. They were someone's son, daughter, father, mother, or beloved friend, and the world has been poorer because of their loss. We are free today because of their sacrifices.

As our Armed Services struggle in our stead even today against the forces of tyranny and political enslavement that are so often grounded in religious fanaticism and would take away our freedoms — not the least of which would be our freedom of worship — it is therefore fitting to follow the example of our forebears and pause to remember the people involved in securing those freedoms.

Problem is, Memorial Day for many Americans has

become just another day to take off work and immerse ourselves in some self-absorbed activity while giving little thought to the day's significance. It shouldn't be that way, so perhaps a brief history of this important observance is in order.

According to The History Channel web site, Memorial Day was originally known as Decoration Day because it was a time set aside to honor the nation's Civil War dead by decorating their graves. It was first widely observed on May 30, 1868, to commemorate the sacrifices of Civil War soldiers, by proclamation of General John A. Logan of the Grand Army of the Republic, an organization of former sailors and soldiers. On May 5, 1868, Logan declared in General Order No. 11 that:

The 30th of May, 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village, and hamlet churchyard in the land. In this observance no form of ceremony is prescribed, but posts and comrades will in their own way arrange such fitting services and testimonials of respect as circumstances may permit.

During the first celebration of Decoration Day, General James Garfield made a speech at Arlington National Cemetery, after which 5,000 participants helped to decorate the graves of the more than 20,000 Union and Confederate soldiers buried in the cemetery.

This 1868 celebration was inspired by local observances

of the day in several towns throughout America that had taken place in the three years since the Civil War.

In our spoiled, materialistic culture of today, we have forgotten too much of our history. We take too lightly the sacrifices of our soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen — and their families. Too many of us are too far removed from such sacrifices ourselves to really appreciate what they have done, and are doing, for us.

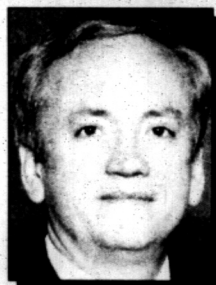
Super Bowl Sunday is a bigger event now. Whiny basketball stars are our heroes. A prime time is more important than attending a Memorial Day ceremony. Slathering barbecue sauce on the ribs weighing down our fancy grills is a higher priority than stopping for a few minutes to recall our war dead.

Christians, of all people, should be ashamed to act that way. If not for the sacrifices of these men and women throughout the history of our country, we would have no freedom to worship God in openness and without fear. We would be severely limited in our ability to evangelize the world (if we could do so at all). We would be defenseless and persecuted everywhere.

War is not God's best for us, and He surely grieves every loss caused by mankind's ultimate inhumanity. As long as there is evil in this world, though, there will undoubtedly be armed conflict and people will die to defend our freedoms.

May we never take them for granted.

GUEST OPINION:



Don't lead children down path to hell

By Gene Gillis, pastor
Cleary Church, Florence

There was a lot of interest expressed in these six words on our church sign a few weeks ago: "Sunday Coaches Lead Children to Hell." There was a tremendous response. Some people called crying. Some people called cursing. Some people called encouraging. When the news media picked up on the story, I shared a few words of explanation.

The word, "Sunday" referred to the day of the week that Christians have worshipped the Lord as their God since Christ's Resurrection. The origin of this weekly day of worship is found in God's Ten Commandments. God's first commandment says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." God's fourth commandment says, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

The word, "Coaches," referred to the leaders of organized sports who intentionally schedule Sunday sports activities which regularly take children away from worshipping and knowing God. According to God's laws, this is a criminal act of sin punishable by death in Hell for eternity. Jesus put it this way in Matthew 18:6. "But if

anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around this neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."

The words, "Lead Children to Hell," referred to the responsibility that adults have to help innocent little children have the opportunity to have blessed life with God. There is no excuse for substituting the god of sports for the one true God who has blessed and cared for America since our beginning. We must trust in the Lord as our God to go to Heaven, instead of Hell.

This sign was not an attempt to stop families from having good, wholesome family times together. It was not an attempt to

attack the good-hearted coaches who so freely give of their time to play with children — and, yes, under the right circumstances children can learn lessons about life in sports, but there is a time for playing and a time for showing reverence for God.

Jesus Christ is our model for blessed life with God. The Bible says concerning Jesus, "As His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day." (Luke 4:16). Jesus did not spend a few weeks in this sport and then a few more weeks in that sport on the Sabbath, and then just worship God on special religious holidays. No, Jesus showed the proper respect and reverence for God! True believers in Jesus Christ should do the same.

Why don't coaches set their Baal tournaments on Monday morning, instead of Sunday morning? It's because they don't want to offend their other god: Mammon! The reason children are getting more and more out of control is because they are out of touch with God. Which is worse — to pour gasoline on children and burn them alive, or to deceive them into burning in Hell forever?

Coach, you're going to die one day. You're going to stand before God, and you're going to Heaven or Hell. Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven." It is not God's will to lead children away from God Sunday after Sunday after Sunday!

Fathers, the Bible says, "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." Oh, Daddy, have mercy on your children. Give them the chance to know Jesus and go to Heaven!

The author may be contacted at 1580 Florence Byram Rd., Florence, MS 39073. Tel: (601) 845-2020.

Churches plan youth Crossover activities

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Youthful exuberance will be a part of the Crossover Nashville evangelistic outreach preceding the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting.

Matt Loving, a student minister at Adaton Church in Starkville, told BP his youth have done some mission activities in the past but have never helped another church directly. About 15 of them will be working with Hillcrest Church in Clarksville, Tenn., in door-to-door evangelism and conducting surveys about church interest.

"The involvement in evangelism was the main thing," he said. "I think Crossover will push our youth out of their comfort zones. I think working with another church in ministry will be positive too so that they get more of an understanding that all Christian churches are in this together. It's not just about our church. That's one thing I've been trying to instill in them, and I think this will reinforce that idea."

Coordinators of the Crossover campaign have reported that more than 12,000 volunteers have pledged to participate either in event ministries or in what is believed will be the largest one-day, door-to-door ministry event on record June 18, with the volunteers starting the day at 8 a.m. at Nashville's Gaylord Entertainment Center.

The one-day, door-to-door ministry event on June 18 will be part of the launch of "The Everyone Can' Kingdom Challenge" Welch is leading to witness, win and baptize 1 million people in one year.

A Crossover celebration service is slated after the day's out-



COOPERATIVE EFFORT — Youth from Adaton Church in Starkville will be among the 12,000 registered participants at Crossover Nashville, a unified evangelistic effort preceding the SBC annual meeting. Youth leaders are hoping their students' minds will be opened to mission opportunities beyond their church. (BP photo courtesy of Adaton Church)

reach at the Gaylord Entertainment Center featuring recording artists Clay Crosse, Ricky Skaggs and The Whites. Welch, LifeWay Christian Resources President James T. Draper Jr. and author Bill Fay ("Share Jesus Without Fear") are among the scheduled speakers. The "Everyone Can Mass Choir" — several thousand strong — also will sing.

Since Crossover began in Las Vegas in 1989, more than 34,000 persons have prayed to receive Christ through this evangelistic

effort. In addition, many new churches have been started. The largest previous participation in the annual Crossover campaign was about 2,000 volunteers.

John Lemmings of Kansas Church in Waco, Ga., who plans to bring about 40 youth to Crossover on June 18, said he hopes they'll realize that "Christianity is not just about the four walls of their local church."

"I want them to see what being on mission for Christ is all about. I'm hoping their mindset for missions will be enlarged and they'll get active serving the Lord Jesus."

Philip Robertson, pastor of Philadelphia Church in Deville, La., and president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, plans to bring about 50 youth to Crossover in conjunction with a trip to a Rick Gage "Go Tell" camp in Georgia the preceding week. Most of the youth have been trained in the FAITH/Sunday School-based evangelism strategy.

What inspired Robertson to plan a trip to Nashville for his youth? "Two words: Bobby Welch," he said of the SBC president who has called for 10,000-plus volunteers at this year's Crossover.

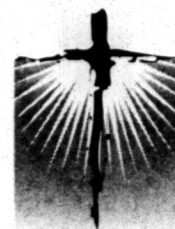
After speaking with Welch and hearing his vision for Crossover, Robertson felt God stir his heart to participate. He said his teenagers are very excited and are looking forward to the experience.

"I think exposing them to the opportunities of personal evangelism and even door-to-door evangelism is a great way to prepare them to be a witness," he said. "Even as they become leaders in our church, I feel like anything we can do to expose them to that type of ministry is going to help prepare them to be the ambassadors that God has called all of us to be."

For more information on Crossover Nashville, go to www.everyonecan.net.

Hispanic report released

ALPHARETTA, GA (BP) — A national Hispanic task force created by the North American Mission Board (NAMB) has submitted a report recommending a wide range of new resources, conferences and training to help Southern Baptists share the Gospel with one of the fastest-growing people groups in the United States and Canada. The task force, headed by Daniel Sanchez, professor of missions at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, began its work last November, meeting three times over the winter. The final 36-page report was submitted along with a 22-page report by Sanchez titled, 21st Century Hispanic Realities. Sanchez' 10 realities are based on the most recent governmental and academic studies of the impact of the Hispanic population in North America. Sanchez calls them "realities" rather than trends, because "they are already in progress and not just factors that are projected to take place in the future." The realities document the growth of Hispanics nationally and in Canada and analyzes various aspects of both first and second Hispanic generations, including their use of Spanish and English, receptiveness to the Gospel, conservative social values and their diversity. The full realities report is available for review and download from NAMB's website, www.namb.net. The task force report provides recommendations for each of four areas of ministry to Hispanics — five recommendations for evangelizing Hispanics, nine for starting new Hispanic SBC churches, five for penetrating the Hispanic culture, and five related to identifying and training Hispanic church leaders. NAMB President Bob Reccord said an internal executive team led by Carlos Ferrer, NAMB's chief financial officer and a native of Cuba, already has begun implementation of several of the recommendations and would provide periodic updates to the task force and the Hispanic constituencies throughout the Southern Baptist Convention. An executive summary of the task force is available at www.namb.net for download.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE
SECOND
FRONT PAGE

THE BAPTIST
Record

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Looking back

10 years ago

The president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta, Larry Lewis, has called for a delay in consideration of the proposed SBC restructuring due to concerns about its impact on home missions.

20 years ago

Skene native Lewis Myers is tapped by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to head the newly-created Cooperative Services International office, which will seek to work in countries not open to missionary-sending programs.

50 years ago

At the Southern Baptist Convention, it was reported that church membership passed the eight million mark, with Sunday School enrollment passing the six million mark.



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with God in your own words:*

1. Lord, I admit that I need you.
(*I have sinned.*)
2. I want forgiveness for my
sins and freedom from eter-
nal death. (*I repent.*)
3. I believe Jesus died and
rose from the grave to forgive
my sins and to restore my
relationship with you.
(*I believe in Jesus.*)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus
Christ into my life. From this
time on, I want to live in a
loving relationship with Him.
(*I receive Christ as my Savior
and Lord.*)

*"But as many as received him,
to them he gave the right to
become children of God, even to
those who believe in his name."
(John 1:12)*

*If you make a decision for
Jesus Christ today, contact a
local Baptist church for spiri-
tual guidance.*

BEAUTIFUL DESTRUCTIVENESS

A few years ago I was invited to speak on the subject, "The Ugliness of Sin." As I was preparing my heart, searching the Scriptures, and getting ready to preach, more and more I was moved away from the topic. I just could not speak on the ugliness of sin. The more I studied, the more I was pulled towards speaking on the beauty of sin. I told the person who invited me that I was making that change and somewhat reluctantly he said, "Okay, whatever you feel is best."

The reason I was moved in that direction is because sin virtually always presents itself as beautiful. The fruit on the tree in the middle of the garden was appealing to Adam and Eve. It was not ugly. The woman who wrecked the effectiveness of David's kingship was beautiful. The appeal that captured the heart of Judas to ruin Jesus was the allurements of 30 pieces of gleaming silver.

Please hear me and understand that I know that sin is ugly! I know that sin will literally ravage a life of every good thing that is there and turn promise, hope, and greatness into emptiness. I have seen over and over again the ugly residue from sin's experience. Yet, I must be honest and tell you that sin puts up a front, a facade, and an appeal that is always beautiful. Sin postures itself as good, happy, wholesome, and absolutely alluring. Hebrews 11 describes Moses as turning from the pleasures of sin in order to follow the Lord and be with the people of God.

The first week in October of 2003, the world was shocked upon hearing of the



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

terrible and grotesque thing that had taken place in the middle of the glitz and glamour of the entertainment world and gambling mecca of Las Vegas. The team of Siegfried and Roy, who presented incredible and unbelievable images of illusion, had suffered a tragedy. One of the main features of their show was the work that they did with huge, beautiful, white tigers. On this particular night, Roy walked out before the audience and explained to them that the tiger he was working with was making his debut. Later it was discovered that statement in itself was not true, for the tiger had often been used and was a part of the show. The huge animal walked around and obeyed the commands of Roy.

During that segment of the show, something happened! The tiger became aggressive and bit Roy's arm. Holding his arm up to fend the tiger off, Roy kept saying, "No! No!" He began hitting the tiger on the nose with his microphone. The crowd thought it was a part of the show and watched with great interest. Then, the tiger lunged for Roy's throat and neck and with his powerful jaws he held Roy in his grasp and drug him off of the stage. Numerous handlers came running to try to get Roy released

but were unable to pry the huge animal away until someone got a fire extinguisher. Blowing the elements from the fire extinguisher into the face of the tiger, he finally let go. Within minutes Roy was rushed to the hospital and following surgery he remained in critical condition for days.

I do not know Roy and have not seen the show except in the snippets that appeared on television, but Siegfried and Roy had made calm house pets out of these huge, beautiful creatures — or so they thought!

In a lifetime of ministry, I have watched thousands of people who, just like Roy, thought they had everything under control. Certainly, they recognized that other people were not as gifted as they were and could not handle a particular situation. They knew that other people were overtaken by drugs or alcohol, or both, but not them! They could manage it and all was okay. Some had seen other people who did not know how to manage an immoral affair, let things get out of control, revelations came, and the crash was tragic! The people to whom I am referring thought they had everything under control. They reasoned to themselves that they would be smarter, stronger, more clever, and able to keep everything under control. Name the

sin and I can almost name you somebody who thought they could deal with that particular sin, keep it under control, manage all the ramifications, and get by with it. They enter into a relationship with sin's presentation of beauty, allurements, gratification, fun, and sensationalism. They reason that because it seems so innocent and brings about so much delight with so little consequences, why be alarmed? They think they are the master and have everything under control.

The problem is the same as it was with Siegfried and Roy — they only thought they were in control of the tiger. When the tiger turned, it was too late to react, to run, to extricate themselves from the situation, or to find safety. That is the way sin works. One clear verse, James 1:15 describes it this way: "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Lust is that appeal and desire, and sin is the open expression of living out that desire. Then, when sin finishes, it turns and lunges for your throat! How tragic!

The wonderful word is that because of the power of Jesus Christ, our sacrificial Lamb and victorious Savior, we can know victory over sin and say, "Thanks be to God that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" Today, before it is too late, turn from the sin with which you have been playing and trust the Savior who can forgive you, cleanse you, and make you whole!

*The author may be contacted at
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MS POSITIONS

PLEASANT HILL BAPTIST CHURCH will be accepting resumes for church secretary until June 8, 2005. Interested parties should send their resumes to PHBC, 1383 Pleasant Hill Road, Columbus, MS 39702, attn: personnel committee.

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World's worst religious violators detailed

WASHINGTON (BP) — The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) added a country and deleted another in its latest list of the world's worst violators of religious liberty.

On the same day it released its annual report May 11, the bipartisan panel recommended for the first time Uzbekistan be designated by the State Department as one of the "countries of particular concern (CPC)," a category reserved for governments that have "engaged in or tolerated systemic and egregious violations of religious freedom."

The USCIRF also removed India from its list of countries recommended for CPC designation.

The commission recommended to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice the retention of Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Vietnam on the CPC list. It also repeated its previous advice that Pakistan and Turkmenistan be added to the category, a suggestion the previous secretary of state, Colin Powell, did not agree to last year.

The USCIRF recommends governments for CPC designation each year, but the secretary of state actually designates which countries are on the CPC list. Communist and Muslim-controlled governments largely, though not totally, comprise the list.

The commission urged Rice to take action called for by the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) against CPC designees — action that so far has been ignored by the Clinton and Bush administrations. In the case of Burma, China, Iran, North Korea, and Sudan, all long-time CPC designees, the

U.S. government has enforced only sanctions already in existence against those countries for other reasons.

"The U.S. government's reliance on pre-existing sanctions has provided little incentive for those CPC governments to reduce or end egregious violations of religious freedom," the USCIRF said in its new report. "[That] is unacceptable as a matter of policy. The failure to take additional action under IRFA suggests that nothing further can, or will, be done by the U.S. government with respect to [CPC designees]."

The administration, the panel said, so far has missed an opportunity to act on last year's additions to the CPC list: Eritrea, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam. The U.S. government did not have sanctions in place against any of those governments beforehand, the USCIRF said.

The deadline for U.S. action on these countries had passed when the 2005 report was published, and the commission "had seen no evidence of genuine progress with regard to freedom of religion or belief in any of these countries," the USCIRF said. "The persistent delays in the process have served only to signal that the U.S. government does not take seriously its stated — and mandated — commitment to promote religious freedom and other human rights throughout the world."

The State Department announced May 5 it had reached agreement with Vietnam on several religious liberty issues. As a result, the communist government agreed to implement new legislative reforms on religious

belief and to call on local officials to adhere to them. In the weeks leading to the announcement, Vietnam had barred forced renunciations of belief, released several inmates who were imprisoned because of their faith, and started to register and allow the reopening of churches that had been shut down, the department said.

The USCIRF noted it was the first agreement made with a CPC designee since the International Religious Freedom Act was enacted. Preeta Bansal, the panel's chairwoman, said the accord with Vietnam "only signals promises of improvement and not actual measurable progress, and ... appears to leave a number of important areas of religious freedom concern unaddressed."

Regarding Vietnam, the commission said more than 100 religious adherents remain in prison or under a form of house arrest, more than 1,000 churches and other worship places are still closed and reports still exist of arrests and harassment of religious and ethnic minorities.

As it has in the past, the panel also released a "watch list" of countries that should be closely monitored, although their religious freedom violations do not reach the level required for CPC recommendation, according to the USCIRF. This year's "watch list" consists of Bangladesh, Belarus, Cuba, Egypt, Indonesia, and Nigeria. Bangladesh is a new addition. Laos and Georgia were dropped from the list, and Uzbekistan was moved from the "watch list" to the CPC category.

The USCIRF also said it is closely monitoring religious liberty circumstances in Afghanistan, Georgia, India, Iraq, Laos and Russia.

Under the IRFA, the State Department has 180 days to institute the policies it will utilize with the CPC designees. The IRFA requires the president to take specific actions against governments designated as CPCs. He is provided a range of options, from diplomacy to economic sanctions to even waiving action. Under IRFA the president may waive any action for several reasons, including if he determines such a waiver is in America's best interest.

The IRFA established the nine-member commission to advise the White House and Congress. The president selects three members of the panel, while congressional leaders name the other six.

The USCIRF's 2005 report may be obtained online at www.uscirf.gov.



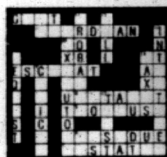
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- Control all of your property including pensions and life insurance? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Name an executor/executrix and trustee you are confident will carry out your wishes? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Include provisions for long-term health care for you and your spouse and/or dependents should the need arise? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Include charitable gifts? ☐ Yes ☐ No

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THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST FOUNDATION

JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. Children Bible Drillers, Rocky Creek, Lucedale



2. Youth Bible Drillers, Rocky Creek, Lucedale



3. Children Bible Drillers, Parkway Church, Houston



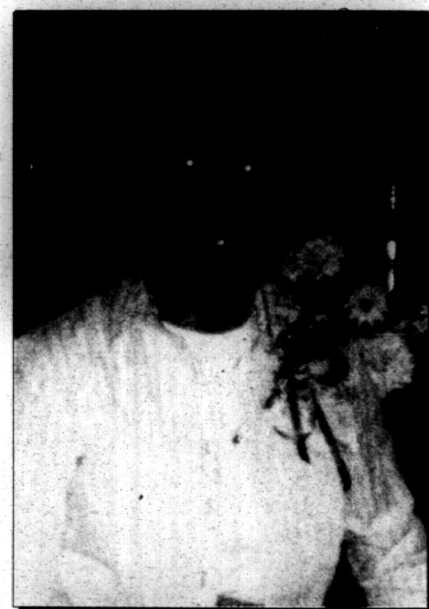
3. Youth Bible Drillers, Parkway Church, Houston



5. Fifty Year Recognition, Cross Roads Church, Pelahatchie



6. Deacon Ordination, Center Hill Church, Hamilton



4. Patrick, Steele Church, Forest

1. **Rocky Creek, Lucedale**, congratulates their children's State Bible Drillers. Front row: Ariel Davis, Kayla Nelson, Harley Brewer, and Emily Eley; back row: Ryan Stringfellow, Robert Martin, Sheldon Herrington, and Conner Davis.

2. **Rocky Creek, Lucedale**, congratulates their youth State Bible Drillers. Front row: Jeb Williamson, Dwight Tillman, Leah Brannan, Jordan Jemison, Savannah Brown, and Kathleen Tillman; back row, Jacob Harvard, Chandler Croom, Adam Brown, and Randall Mallette.

3. **Parkway Church, Houston**, congratulates their children and youth Bible drillers.

4. **Steele Church, Forest**, recently honored Martha Patrick during Family and Friends Day. Patrick, the church secretary, has been on dialysis for 33 years and works part-time at the Forest Public Library.

5. **Cross Roads Church, Pelahatchie**, recently recognized individuals who have been members of the church for 50 years or more. Shown, seated, are Dot Gray, Myrtle Varner, Eddie Myrtle Moore, and Betty Opal Crawford; standing are Durward Gray, Albert Gray, George Bradshaw, Verdian Moore, and Butch Varner.

6. **Center Hill Church, Hamilton**, ordained Barry

English and Rusty Prillhart as deacons May 15. Shown are English, Terry Edwards, pastor, and Prillhart.

7. **Main Street Church, Mendenhall**, is seeking a part-time Minister of Youth. Send resumes to 550 Main Street South, Mendenhall, MS 39114.

8. **Coila Church, Carroll County**, will host the Promised Quartet's Fourth Annual Memorial Day Sing, May 30, 10 a.m. Lunch and concessions will be available; bring lawn chairs.

9. **Poplar Springs Church, Hazlehurst**, will host Hosanna, a Southern Gospel quartet from Magee, May 29, 10:30 a.m.

Bibliocipher

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ELR YGAYLREX, KRLAFB, O
XRTB WU WRXXRTDRG
KRCAGR ELU CNHR,
PLOHL XLNFF YGRYNGR
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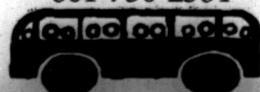
WNGM ATR: EPA

Clue: T = N

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke Two: Seven.

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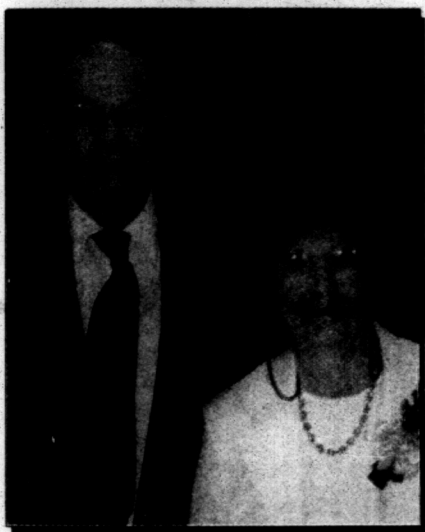
RiteWay Bus Sales

JUST FOR THE RECORD



10. Note Burning Ceremony, Morgan Chapel Church, Sturgis

10. **Morgan Chapel Church, Sturgis**, recently burned a debt note, making the church debt-free. Shown are Kyle Morgan, Jack Henry, Mark Gillis, Kurt Wiggins, Ralph Windle, Jamie Morgan, Reagan Sedler, and Bill Roberts.



11. Goings, First Church, Byhalia

11. **First Church, Byhalia**, honored J. B. and Waurene Going for over 50 years of service to the church. Going has served as church clerk and is serving as treasurer and deacon; his wife serves as Sunday School teacher, ministry assistant, church librarian, and WMU director.

12. **North Long Beach Church, Long Beach**, recognized their youth with a commitment ring service for those who completed a True Love Waits conference led by

Clinton White, Bayou View Church, Gulfport.

13. The 1st-4th grade Girls in Action of **First Church, McComb**, learned about missionaries in India and made prayer reminder peacocks (the national bird of India.) Shown are the participants.

14. Robert Hill, pastor of **Calvary Church, Cleveland**, has retired, after serving Calvary since 1979. He has been a chaplain at the local hospital and moderator of the Mid Delta Association. Shown are Hill and his wife, Hilda.

15. **Indian Springs Church, Laurel**, honors the Children's Bible Drillers who participated in the State Drills. Shown are the participants.

16. **Ackerman Church, Ackerman**, congratulates their State Bible Drill participants. Shown, from left: Dayna Presley, Michaela Parker, Abby Wood, Alison Burney, Megan Sanders, Ellen Graves, and Claire Graves. Danny Irvin, pastor.

17. **Mount Olive, Meridian**, congratulates their State Bible Drillers, the first group to ever come from Mount Olive: Katie Gunter, Kennedy Castleberry, Nicole Williams, Jordan Lowe, Kyisha Houston, and Brett Waltman. Directors are Jennifer Davis and Teresa Waltman; Danny Davis, pastor.



13. GAs, First Church, McComb



14. Robert and Hilda Hill, Calvary Church, Cleveland



15. Bible Drillers, Indian Springs Church, Laurel



16. State Bible Drillers, Ackerman Church, Ackerman



17. State Bible Drillers, Mt. Olive Church, Meridian

STAFF CHANGES



Wolfe

LeMoyne Boulevard Church, Biloxi, has called Nicolas Wolfe as music minister.

Church won't drop cross for graduation

MELBOURNE, Fla. (ABP) — Calvary Chapel in Melbourne, Fla., won't cover the cross in its sanctuary to quiet critics who say holding four high-school graduation ceremonies in the building violates the Constitution.

"We don't mind having them use the facility, but we won't hide what we are or who we are by hiding the cross," said Melody Glover, spokesperson for the Central Florida church.

A state judge ruled May 18 that the ceremonies likely violate the constitutional ban on government establishment of religion, but he said the complaint was filed too late for the schools to make other arrangements.

The church can seat 3,500 people, including 700 in overflow rooms, which reportedly makes it the largest indoor facility in the county. Even that will not accommodate all the parents and friends who want to come to graduation, however. Several of the schools have held the ceremonies in outdoor stadiums, but Florida's heat and spring thunderstorms make them uncomfortable and unpredictable.

Church-state specialists say the Melbourne case is in a gray area of the law. Schools have the right to rent space from churches, for instance for overflow classroom space, but the facilities should not have religious symbols that dominate the setting, since that would imply a religious intent.

Court: Shorter College move not legal

ATLANTA (BP) — The Georgia Supreme Court, in a 4-3 decision May 23, upheld a Georgia Court of Appeals ruling that Shorter College's actions to sever ties with the Georgia Baptist Convention be set aside as outside the bounds of state corporate law.

A DeKalb County Superior Court judge, in April 2003, had allowed Shorter to dissolve and transfer its assets to the newly formed Shorter College Foundation Inc., thus discontinuing the Georgia Baptist Convention's selection of the college's trustees.

In March 2004, a three-judge panel of the Georgia Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the convention's appeal. Shorter then took the case to the Georgia Supreme Court.

The Georgia Supreme Court ruling focused on "issues dealing with nonprofit corporate law and the fiduciary duties of nonprofit directors," convention attorney Walter Bush said. "This case allowed the court to address those concerns."

Shorter has 10 days to ask the Georgia Supreme Court to rehear the case; otherwise, the decision will be final.

JUST FOR THE RECORD



18. Creative Movement Team, Sebastopol Church, Sebastopol



18. Bible Drillers, Sebastopol Church, Sebastopol

18. **Sebastopol Church, Sebastopol**, recognizes its children and youth Bible drillers. Also, the Creative Movement Team of the church led in worship on Palm Sunday. Shown are the Bible drillers and the Creative Movement Team.

\$20. For more information, call Dana Copeland at (662) 257-9043.

20. **Gunter Road Church, Florence**, ordained Dann Fabian as deacon May 1. Shown are Tina Fabian, Fabian, and pastor Gene Jordan.

19. The Amory Ladies Community Bible Study is sponsoring the third annually Community Bible Study Conference at the Lee County Agri Center, Verona, Aug. 12-13. The conference is led by Rita Sweatt, wife of pastor Lloyd Sweat, **Meadowood Church, Verona**. The Bible study had its origins in Meadowood. Tickets are

21. Nineteen girls were honored at the Acteen recognition service at **First Church, New Albany**. Shown are the Acteens.

22. **Society Hill Church, Oakvale**, is hosting the Renfro's from Lawrence County in concert May 29, 6 p.m. A love offering will be taken.

23. **Northcrest Church, Meridian**, is hosting the Jimmie Rodgers Music Festival Contemporary Gospel Music Night June 3 at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$16 in advance, \$18 day of concert, and \$20 for the Artist Circle. Call (601) 482-3498 or (601) 743-2682 for information.

24. **Bear Creek Church, Attala County**, is holding Memorial Day services June 5, 10:30 a.m., with lunch following.

25. **Duck Hill Church, Duck Hill**, held a reception in honor of Elmo Branch recognizing 38 years of music ministry in the church. Shown are Branch, Jamie Branch, and Travis Gray, pastor.

26. **First Church, Terry**, exceeded their \$5000 Annie Armstrong Offering goal by giving a total of \$5,207.53.

27. **Calvary Church, Bogue Chitto**, recognized their recent graduates with gifts, a slide presentation, and a skit. On Mother's Day, the church recognized the youngest and oldest mothers, and had a baby dedication service for eight children.

28. **Pinola Church, Pinola**, is hosting Krystal Tanner, Charleston, in concert May 29, 11 a.m. Tanner will also be in concert at **Strong River Church, Pinola**, May 29, 6:30 p.m. A love offering will be taken.



20. Deacon Ordination, Gunter Road Church, Florence



21. Acteens Recognition, First Church, New Albany



25. Recognition of Elmo Branch, Duck Hill Church, Duck Hill

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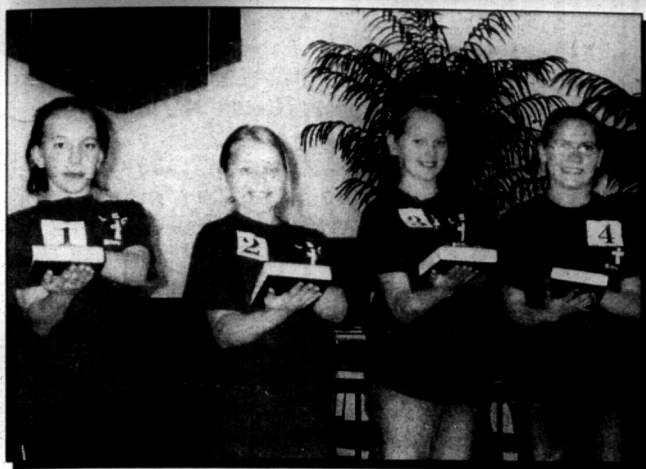
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JUST FOR THE RECORD



29. Children and Youth Bible Drillers, Liberty Church, Rankin County



29. **Liberty Church, Rankin County**, honors their children and youth Bible drillers. Shown are the participants.

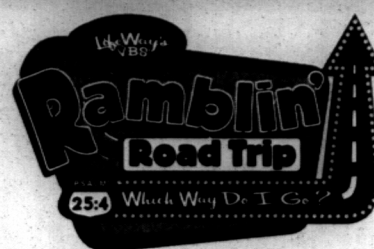
30. Scott Parker was ordained to the gospel ministry April 23 at **Palestine Church, Harrisville**. Shown is the ordination council; Parker is third from right.

31. **Leaf River Church, Smith County**, hosts Tal Vardaman in concert May 29, 6 p.m. A finger food fellowship follows.



30. Ordination of Parker, Palestine Church, Harrisville

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



Calvary Church, Bogue Chitto: VBS, Ramblin' Road Trip, June 13 - 17, 8:30 - 11:30 a.m.; two years through 6th grade; Trent Bilbo, pastor.

Yalobusha Association: VBS musical Ramblin' Road at **Bethel Church, Water Valley**; May 28, 7 p.m.; performed by Bethel's children and youth choirs.

Union Church, Roxie: VBS, Ramblin' Road Trip, June 13 - 17, 8 a.m. - noon; Carl Evans, pastor.

Harrisville Church, Harrisville: VBS, June 6 - 10, 8:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.; VBS parade, June 4, 1 p.m. Call (601) 847-1593 for information.

New Hope Church, Foxworth: VBS, The Prayer Safari that Leads to Jesus, June 13 - 17, 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., preschool - 6th grade.



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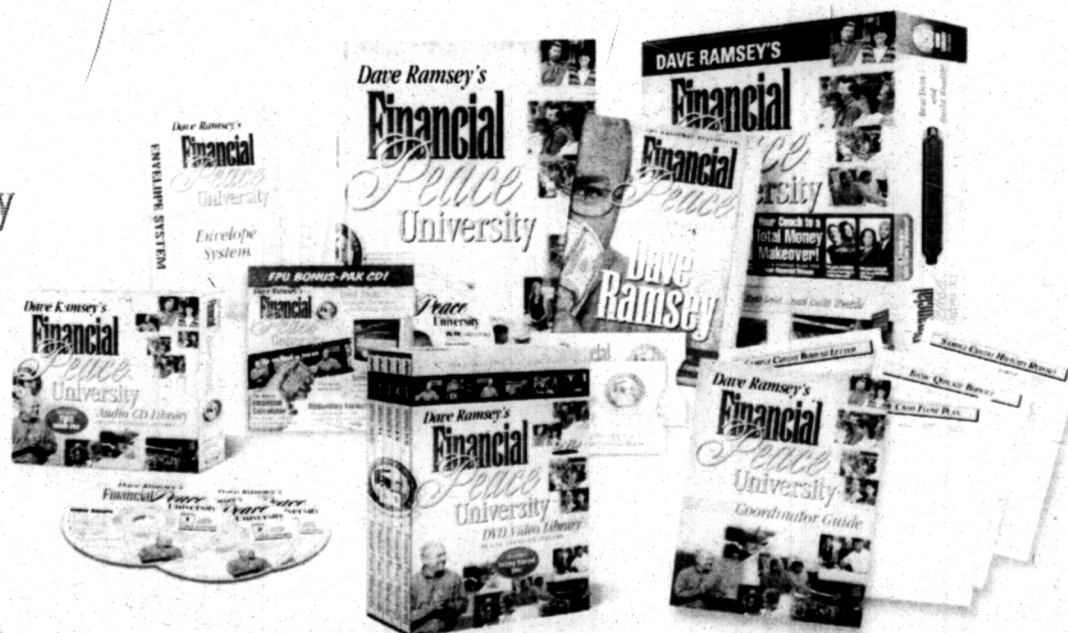
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Supreme Ct. to rule on notification

WASHINGTON (BP) — The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to rule on a state law requiring parental notification when an underage girl seeks an abortion. The high court announced May 23 it would review a lower court decision striking down New Hampshire's parental notification law. Oral arguments in the case will be heard in the court's next term, which begins in October.

The case is *Ayotte v. Planned Parenthood*.

A three-judge panel of the First Circuit Court of Appeals, which is based in Boston, ruled in November that the law is unconstitutional because it does not contain an exception to protect the health of the mother and its exception for a threat to her life is too narrow. The appeals court's decision upheld the ruling of a federal judge.

The 2003 law says a parent must be notified in person or in writing by an abortion provider when a female under 18 has requested the procedure. The notice must be given 48 hours prior to the abortion. The law also includes a provision permitting the girl to seek a judicial bypass to avoid the notice requirement.

Pro-life lawyer Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the American Center for Law and Justice, said this is "a critical area of the law that needs to be corrected."

"It is the parents who have a responsibility to be directly involved in decisions involving the health and well-being of their children," Sekulow said in a written statement. "To permit minors to get abortions without parents being notified is not only legally flawed but bad public policy."

Laws requiring parental notification or consent are in effect in 24 states, according to the National Right to Life Committee.

In addition to New Hampshire, the First Circuit includes the states of Maine, Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

REVIVALS & HOMECOMINGS

Smyrna Church, Hazlehurst: Homecoming, June 5; worship, 11 a.m.; Rodney Taylor, Natalbany, La., speaking.

Clear Springs Church, Coffeeville: 100 year anniversary, June 5.

Arlington Church, Bogue Chitto: Homecoming, May 29; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship following; dinner after service and singing, 1:30 p.m.; Ferrell Cork, leading worship.

Bethesda Church, Terry: Homecoming, June 5; worship, 10:45 a.m.; covered dish dinner following; Michael Johnson, speaking.

Bethel Church, Water Valley: Homecoming, June 5; Danny Champion, speaking; Steve Fredrick, music.

Calvary Church, Pricedale: Homecoming, June 5; fellowship, 9:30 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.; afternoon

singing and praise service following lunch. Thomas Wicker, speaker; The Smiths, music; Harold Gartman, pastor.

Shiloh Church, Carroll County: Revival, June 10 - 12; Fri. - Sat., 7 p.m.; Sun., 11 a.m.; Melvin Mordecai, Reform, Ala., evangelist; Doug Warren, music. Doug Warren, pastor.

Friendship Church, Brookhaven: Homecoming, May 29; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; lunch at noon followed by afternoon service. Howard Smith, speaking; Chad Yarborough, pastor.

Mt. Olive Church, Coila: Homecoming, May 29; worship, 10:30 a.m.; covered dish lunch following; Larry Edwards, speaking.

Faith Church, Silver Creek: Revival, June 5 - 8; Sun., 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.; lunch at noon; Mon. - Wed., dinner, 6 p.m.; worship, 7 p.m.; Richard Green, evangelist; Diann Berry and Hubert Greer, music; Daniel Perry, pastor.

Main Street Church, Mendenhall: Homecoming, June 5; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; dinner following. Eric Gervais, pastor; Roger Welch, music.

Center Hill Church, Hamilton: Homecoming, June 5; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; covered dish lunch, noon; afternoon singing, 1 p.m. James Towery, preaching; Bill Monaghan, music; Terry Edwards, pastor.

Coila Church, Carroll County: Homecoming, June 5; worship, 11 a.m., followed by lunch and afternoon singing; Roy Bush, Greenwood, speaking; Promised Quartet, music. Revival, June 6 - 10, 7 p.m. nightly; Clarence Cooper, Grenada, preaching; Promised Quartet, music; Billy Blakely, pastor.

Woodland Church, Woodland: Revival, June 13 - 18; 7 p.m. nightly; Jack Hollingsworth, preaching; Matt Hudson, music; James Carpenter, interim pastor.

COLLEGE NEWS



Coglan



Nettles



Pierce



Taylor



Todd



Dedeaux



Hembree



Remann



Graham



Blount

1. Honors Convocation Award Winners, MC

1. The Mississippi Honors Convocation at **Mississippi College** was held April 19. Crystal Beth Coghlan, Holly Bluff, won the Scott-Swor Founders Award; Katie DeDeaux, Hattiesburg, and Stephen Graham, Clinton, won the Alpha Chi Scholar Athlete of the Year Award; Jessica Lynn Todd, Collierville, Tenn., and Bennett Tyler Blount, Clinton, won the Mortar Board Freshman Woman and Freshman Man of the Year; Keith Hembree,

Hattiesburg, won the Matthew Bradford Senator of the Year Award; Emily Blanchard, Louisville, Shelley Franklin, Jackson, Claire Nettles, Clinton, Krista Rhemann, Florence, and Emily Taylor, Pontotoc, all won the Alpha Lambda Delta Book Award; and Debbie Pierce, Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Chair and Professor, Department of Foreign Languages, and professor of French, received the Outstanding Faculty Award from the Student Government Association.

2. **Mississippi College** held undergraduate commencement May 7. Chief Justice James W. Smith, Jr., brought the commencement address; Loretta Beasley, Crystal Springs, brought the invocation, and Rory Lee, Executive Director, Baptist Children's Village, brought the benediction. Shown are Smith, Lee Royce, Beasley, and Lee.

3. **William Carey College (WCC)** education faculty members Eugene Owens, Barry Morris, Bitsy Miller, Barbara Stanford, Lorena Roseberry Smith, Patricia Ward, Stacey Reeves, Linda Steele, and Norris Williams are shown gathered in front of the newly constructed Lorena Roseberry Smith Hall during dedication ceremonies held recently on the Hattiesburg campus of WCC. Smith Hall houses the School of Education and has cutting edge technology.



2. Undergraduate Commencement, MC

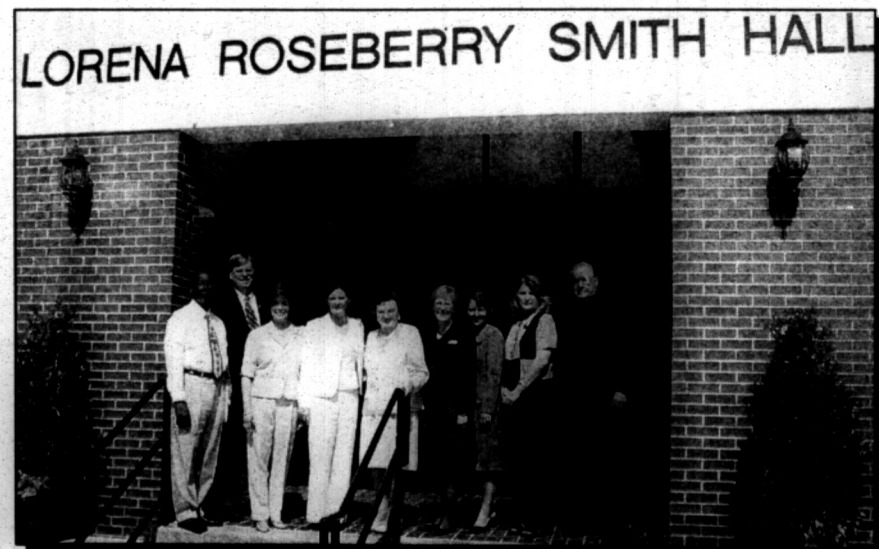
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3. Lorena Roseberry Smith Hall Dedication, WCC

FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Leave a Godly Legacy

Genesis 24:1-4, 12-16, 50-51, 61-67

By Rick Henson

God had truly blessed Abraham. He had kept His word and given to Abraham and Sarah a son, Isaac. Isaac means, "laughter," and truly Isaac was the joy of their lives. Eventually Sarah died at 127 years of age and Abraham later married Keturah. In all, Abraham had eight children, including Ishmael and Isaac. Eventually Abraham died at the age of 175, or 100 years after God called him and he left his home, his country, and his father's house. All of these details about Abraham are in Genesis 25.

Before he died Abraham desired that Isaac take a wife, but not one from the Canaanites. He wanted Isaac to marry from within his own family back home in Chaldea. In those days it was not uncommon to marry a relative. In fact,

Sarah was Abraham's half-sister, according to Genesis 20:12. So Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for the son of Abraham.

In the providence of God, the servant of Abraham came to a well and prayed for the guidance of God. God led the young girl Rebekah to help with the watering of the animals and she answered as Abraham's servant had prayed. By the way, Rebekah also was the granddaughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother. So God led the servant of Abraham to the right person for Isaac. Rebekah was excited that God had selected her and willingly left her home to go meet her new husband. Since God had prospered Abraham he gave rich gifts to the family and to Rebekah. Even Rebekah's fami-



Henson

ly recognized the hand of God in these events.

When Rebekah saw Isaac from far away she asked who he was. The servant of Abraham said the he was Isaac, his master. Rebekah was so excited. She covered her face with her veil and gladly met her new husband. The Bible says that Isaac loved her.

Certainly this was no modern courtship, and yet it was ordained by God and blessed by the Lord. From this biblical story we can glean great truths. First, God had a definite plan for Isaac. God had prepared a bride for Isaac hundreds of miles away, and yet God led the two together. I believe that God has definite plans for each of us. We may choose to seek and obey His will, or disregard it. When we seek the Lord with all of our hearts, He promises that He will be found. Jeremiah 29:12-13 "Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me

when you search for Me with all your heart."

Second, when God is at work in our lives, others will recognize His hand, although they may not understand that God is at work. The relatives of Rebekah accepted that God was at work after the servant of God told them how God had arranged his meeting with Rebekah. God desired from Israel a kingdom of priests representing Him to the world. He still desires a multitude of witnesses who take His gospel message to all every nation and every person. When the Lord does a great work in our lives, we should rejoice and offer to Him the sacrifice of praise as described in Hebrews 13. God alone is worthy of our praise and adoration. We speak of football, basketball, children, spouses, work, finances, news items, homes, and relatives, and rarely speak of the work of the Lord.

Third, God used Rebekah to comfort Isaac. Proverbs 18:22 tells us "He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains

favor from the LORD." The Bible in Genesis 2:24 says that, "a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." One's life completely changes with marriage. In marriage sorrows are halved and joys are doubled. Marriage is a partnership for life. In that wonderful relationship of a man and a woman committed to the Lord, God uses each to provide what is lacking in the other. When we understand that God made men and women different to be complimentary, and not competitive, our lives will be much happier.

Isaac learned from his father, Abraham how to trust God and how to hear from the Lord. When Rebekah was barren, like Sarah, Isaac heard from the Lord. Later, when Rebekah was carrying Jacob and Esau, Isaac heard from the Lord about these two. Abraham's legacy was Isaac. What legacy will you leave?

Henson is pastor of Oakdale Church, Brandon.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Rely on the Lord's Faithfulness

Lamentations 3: 19-33, 37-39

By Billie Buckley

The Book of Lamentations is a hymn of heartbreak sung by Jeremiah over the fall of Jerusalem. Doesn't this remind us of another who wept over this holy city in the New Testament?

Many of us have turned to our own hymn books when "sorrows like sea billows roll." In fact, many of us probably have the page number memorized.

Oswald Chambers writes about this subject: "The problem in connection with sorrow and suffering arise from the fact there is seemingly no explanation for it. Suffering will always remain a mystery."

So, today in this lesson don't look for our study to

solve the mystery of unanswered questions and why we think God is not fair in His treatment of us.

Personally, I know some of my suffering is from the consequences of wrong choices I have made. Yet, I also know God's first words to me in the morning are I love you, and his last words at night are I love you.

This love-thought in mind, let's see if through Jeremiah's personal pain we too can rely on our Lord's steadfast love in all of our suffering. Let the lessons begin.

First Lesson: Coming to terms with suffering through expressing painful memories. (vv. 19-20) We must look back to vv. 1-17 where Jeremiah felt as if



Buckley

God had locked him up in deep darkness. (Did I hear you say, been there done that?)

Beginning in verse 19 he comes to terms with his suffering by remembering it all; by hitting rock bottom, yet keeping a grip on the rope of hope.

Second Lesson: The rope of hope is none other than God's persistent, unchanging love. (vv. 21-26) Many have said verses 22-23 are some of the most beautiful passages in the Bible. Here we are reminded of the steadfast love of God for us. It will never run out or dry up. Makes us want to break out in song with "Great is Thy Faithfulness," doesn't it?

Remember Jeremiah wrote these words in the midst of his personal pain when the darkness was the deepest. This reminds me of the darkness of the cross where the light of God's love was brightly revealed for you and me.

Over and over we see Jeremiah hanging on to his hope in God. Over and over he faced his despair with hope. Patiently and quietly he waits for God's help, knowing God will never let go of His end of the rope of hope.

Third Lesson: Recognizing the Lord's purpose behind our pain. (vv. 27-33) These verses are dealing with suffering as judgment of our sins.

Ray Stedman reminds us to keep in mind as we deal with this suffering that God endures. Because God endures, the great purposes and word of God endures.

Therefore, we too can endure and stick it out through hard times. Others may help, but God's words instruct us to be alone, be silent, be prayerful and be watchful for hope to appear.

There are two things He tells us not to do. Don't keep on asking questions. Don't run from suffering. Face it.

Fourth Lesson: Acknowledging God's power helps us rely on Him even when suf-

fering from our sins. (vv. 37-39) Never forget this judgment is redemptive in purpose and not all calamities are from God. Many are the result of making wrong choices on our part. Never forget this: "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world."

The final lesson of Lamentations is in Chapter 5 where we are reminded our Maker and our Master will give us a fresh start if we but come back to Him.

Maybe it is fitting we close with these words from another hymn reflecting the heart of God toward His children, "Come home, come home; all ye who are weary come home."

Thank you for letting me come into your home with the good news of Jesus Christ these past 3 months. May we, like Jeremiah, tell the story of his love clearly and often. May we never mess it up by the way we teach or the way we live.

Buckley is a member of Petal-Harvey Church, Petal.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts

are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted.

All news items are subject to editing,

and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

THE BAPTIST
Record



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

SO BE IT

Editor:

In your May 12 editorial, Losing the battle for baptisms, you imply that the decrease in baptisms per member is due to the conservative resurgence of the Southern Baptist Convention. As a conservative Southern Baptist, I am inclined to ask, "What's the point?"

I hope and pray the day will come when all Southern Baptists view baptism as an ordinance of God (Article VII of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000), and not a means by which names are added to church rolls. Southern Baptists have for too long made baptism the benchmark of successful churches, pastorates, and evangelism. This being the case, pastors often fall to the temptation of "baptize or bust."

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy encouraging him to, "Preach the Word and do the work of an evangelist," with no mention of baptism. In evaluating his own ministry, Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:16-17, "Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void." (NASB)

If fewer people have been baptized per member since the struggle for doctrinal integrity and Biblical inerrancy in our denomination, whereby power was wrested

away from the liberal/moderate leadership of the past, so be it. Baptism was never meant to be the measure for success for churches, pastorates, denominations, or evangelistic efforts.

Joey Barnard, pastor
Mt. Olive Church
Smithdale

ADOPT AN ANNUITANT

Editor:

Pastors have the opportunity to help older ministers, their widows, and other staff members in a positive simple sermon. A sample sermon is available for June 26.

The Adopt-An-Annuitant program of the Annuity Board/ GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) provides financial assistance to qualified retired staff members. Several years ago the Adopt-An-Annuitant and the \$1.4 million from the SBC Cooperative Program combined to form the Retired Minister's Support Fund. Upon approval the retired minister, staff member, or the widow of a minister receives a monthly assistance of \$200 (single person) or \$265 (a couple). Often, this small monthly income makes the difference in paying the electric bill or getting needed medications.

The relief fund distributes more than \$500,000 a month to retired SBC ministers, workers or their widows. Mississippi currently has 145 people receiving monthly assistance. Adopt-An-Annuitants recipi-

ents must meet guidelines for income, assets and years of Southern Baptist service.

The Annuity Board/ GuideStone also coordinates prayer links between donors and annuitants who give permission to share their names. Adopt-An-Annuitant Sunday is June 26. Pastors can get a sermon for the occasion by logging onto www.absbc.org. Churches can celebrate and inform the congregation about Adopt-An-Annuitant via bulletin inserts and video presentations.

Robin D. Nichols
Financial Services Rep.
Miss. Baptist Convention Bd.

PRAY FOR THEM

Editor:

The news media doesn't report news of Christians who are suffering severe persecution in various parts of the world, therefore some Christians are not aware of the need to pray for these brothers and sisters whose only crime is their faith and obedience to Christ.

Jesus warned us in John 16:1-3 that the time would come when "he that kills you will think he does God service — because they have not known the Father or me." There are so many Scriptures along this line, such as Mark 13:31-33; 2 Timothy 3:12; and Revelation 6:9-11, 12:13, and 13:7. Hebrews 13:3 states, "Remember then that are in bonds (prison) as bound with them." That means pray for them.

Considering that anyone of every kindred tongue and nation who is a child of God is a member of my family, I should be concerned for that one. There was a time when I could only pray, "Bless the persecuted Christians, etc.," but didn't know specific places and people. The first is important, but it helps to have names and places.

If you were in prison because of your faith in Christ (which could be some time), would you want someone to pray for you? I would, too. Don't say there's nothing you can do. You can pray!

Helen Scarborough
Jackson

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OBITUARIES

Monte Lee McMahan Clendinning



Clendinning

of Brandon, age 82, retired missionary, seminary instructor, and author, died May 2 in Brandon from complications of Alzheimer's Disease. Her funeral was held on May 6 at First Church, Brandon, east campus, with interment in Brandon Memorial Cemetery.

A native of Batesville, Clendinning graduated from Blue Mountain College in Blue Mountain and Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth, where she earned a Master's degree in Religious Education.

After seminary graduation, she served as education director for Northside (now Woodland Hills) Church, Jackson; First Church, Greenwood; and First Church, Philadelphia.

She was elected to the faculty of the School of Religious Education at Southwestern

Seminary in 1955. In 1958, she and her husband Byron Arthur (Pat) Clendinning were appointed as foreign missionaries to the International Baptist Seminary in Ruschlikon-Zurich, Switzerland.

Upon their return to the United States, Monte Clendinning worked with the Woman's Missionary Union and taught adjunctively at Southwestern Seminary. Beginning in the 1980's she served as conference director for the World Missions Evangelism Center at Southwestern Seminary until her retirement in 1995. In 1993, her book, My Place in God's Purpose: A Commentary for Women on Galatians and Ephesians, was published and distributed by New Hope Books.

She is survived by her husband of 47 years; two sons, four grandchildren, and a sister.

W. Otis Seal, age 85, retired pastor, education minister, and evangelist,

died May 2 at Jeff Anderson Regional Medical Center in Meridian.



Seal

A native of Picayune, Seal held a bachelor's degree from Mississippi State University in Starkville and attended Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth and New Orleans Seminary. He was awarded an honorary doctorate from William Carey College in Hattiesburg in 1977.

Seal pastored First Church, Itta Bena, for six years and Calvary Church, Meridian, for 31 years. He also served as educational director for First Church, Picayune, and First Church, Columbus. Seal was a charter member, president, and pastor advisor of the Mississippi Baptist Religious Education Association, and served on the executive committee of the Mississippi

Baptist Convention Board.

He conducted revivals in 11 states and several foreign countries. He preached before 35,000 people in India, resulting in more than 2,000 souls saved. He authored two books, 103 Years of Trials and Triumph, and This is the Work of God, both presently out of print.

Seal provided books from his private library to assist young preachers at William Carey College and established a trust fund to propitiate the program. He also organized Calvary Christian School in 1964 and served as the school's superintendent for 23 years.

He was a senior partner in Seal's Stallion Station, a breeder of quarter horses shown across the country.

He was preceded in death by his wife of 54 years, Jacque Edwards Seal. Survivors include his wife, Elise Warren Seal of Meridian, a son, a daughter, a sister, five grandchildren, three step-grandchildren, and 12 great-grandchildren.